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SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL/PHD, EB, AND WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: GOH BREAKS PROMISE AND CHORTI INDIGENOUS GROUP
BLOCKS COPAN MAYAN RUINS; PROTEST LIKELY TO BE REPEATED

1. On June 7, a group of indigenous people living in and near Copan, armed with clubs, seized the Mayan Archaeological Park of Copan Ruins. The demonstrators prevented an estimated 300 tourists from entering the park for the entire day, which meant a loss of revenue for both the park and the Honduran Ministry of Culture. The seizure was an effort to force the government to make good on their 1997 promise to purchase land that would then be divided among the members of the Chorti ethnic group. This was not the first protest to close the Copan Ruins. Two other major demonstrations occurred in 1998 and 2000. Negotiations between the government officials and the leaders of the National Counsel of Native Mayan-Chorti of Honduras (CONICH) began shortly after the demonstration started. The two parties reached an agreement by the end of the day that the government would honor their payments within the week, once the proper paperwork was filed. This appeased the protesters, but this promise has been made before and it is questionable that the government will follow through this time.

2. The Mayan Archaeological Park of Copan Ruins is a major source of revenue for Honduras. However, little of the revenue trickles down to the descendants of the magnificent ruins, including the Chorti. The indigenous people are among the poorest in the country. They are demanding the government honor an act signed in 1997, in which the authorities promised to buy land to distribute between members of the Chorti ethnic group.

3. Comment: Two months later, the GOH still has yet to fulfill their promise to the Chorti people in Copan. Thus, it is likely future protests by the Chorti will once again shut down the Mayan Archaeological Park of Copan Ruins to tourists from around the world. The lack of follow-through by the GOH is teaching the Chorti that only by jeopardizing the park's tourist revenue can they get attention from the GOH. End Comment.
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